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**An Assessment of the Impact of the
Annual Codes of the Education Department
on the Development of a Rural School.**

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INTRODUCTION

The Education Act of 1870 was a milestone in the social history of England and Wales: until this time children's education had been regarded as a certainty only by the wealthier classes, and if the Church had no facility for teaching the rudimentary principles to the village children then often the children went untaught. After the passing of the first Education Act the acquisition of compulsory, free education for all was a slow process, and the yearly *Report of the Committee of Council on Education*, the handbook of the Education Department, was the means by which the implementation of legislation and policy was effected in schools. The *Report* included the Code of the minutes of the Education Department and the instructions and circulars to government inspectors. These regulated all areas of school life and elucidated procedure for examinations, and they were revised yearly. Gradually a national system of education evolved which became the convention for all children, instead of just for the rich. This work intends to show how a small, rural school adapted to this system, and how the children themselves, coming as they did from a self-contained community in Cheshire, responded to the new routines and culture to which they were suddenly exposed.

On January 11th, 1875, a village school in Cheshire, about seven miles north of Chester, became a Public Elementary School. The school, at Thornton-le-Moors, had been in existence since 1578,¹ probably financed by bequests from wealthy

landowners. *White's Gazetteer* of 1860 states that the present school was built in 1790 and "endowed with lands yielding about £12 per annum for which 20 scholars are educated free".² The ecclesiastical parish of Thornton-le-Moors consisted of five townships: Dunham Hill, Elton, Hapsford, Wimbolds Trafford and Thornton itself, nearly all representing early settlements in the area on rocky outcrops which rose out of the marshy landscape. Although, by the mid-nineteenth century, most of the area had been drained to give a fertile farmland, it was still very wet in winter. The main crops were potatoes and oats, with fruit-growing and pastureland also important.

The original school had been built in the village of Thornton-le-Moors itself, but the 1790 building was situated in a position more central to the parish so that it could serve all five townships. Unfortunately, there were now very few children who lived close and most had to walk a considerable distance to get to school. Up to 1875 the school had been run as a National school under the aegis of the Church. Its expenses, including the master's salary, were met from endowments, from a voluntary rate raised by the parishioners, and from small weekly payments made by each child. A grant from the National Society, the Church of England's organisation for the protection of their own schools, could also be called upon to help with capital expenses.

As the Victorian age advanced, the controversy over the education of children whose parents could not afford to pay for it grew. It was widely recognised that in the newly industrialised society, a literate and numerate population was essential for the

¹ P.J.Wallis, "A Preliminary Register of Old Schools in Lancashire and Cheshire", in *Transactions of the Historic Society of Lancashire and Cheshire*, Vol. 120 (1968), p. 21.

² *White's Gazetteer of Cheshire*, 1860, p. 203.

technological and clerical expertise needed in the development of factories and businesses. A Parliamentary grant system was inaugurated in 1833; split amongst all elementary schools which applied as long as they achieved certain standards there was very little money to go round.³ A large section of the ruling classes, however, considered that a literate population would threaten the established system, weakening their own position as time-honoured leaders. More controversy attended those who wanted education for all: was it to be compulsory, and, if so, should it be free?

Compulsory education was denounced at grass-root level: the inhabitants of rural villages found themselves inevitably bound up in the agricultural economy, as in Thornton-le-Moors where the Census of 1881 shows that the majority of families were connected in some way with the land.⁴ (See Appendix I.) The community accepted the use of children as farm helpers, or workers, both as cheap labour for big farmers, as free labour for farmers and smallholders with children, and as extra earners for those parents on low incomes where every penny made a difference. The removal of children from land labour was not popular.

Although the Education Acts of the late nineteenth century created financial support for schools, they were not as effective as had been hoped by some liberal-minded reformists. Too many compromises aimed at soothing the quarrelsome factions in the country meant that initially, in some areas, very little changed. Although the authorities responsible for education in their area were enabled to set up Board

³ Gillian Sutherland, *Elementary Education in the Nineteenth Century*, (London 1971) pp. 15-16.

⁴ Cheshire County Record Office, Census Returns (1881), Thornton-le-Moors Mf 146 / 21.

Schools if they thought provision inadequate, in rural areas, where there were already church schools set up by voluntary efforts, there was little need for change. But pressure upon the schools to adapt to government standards or be replaced by a Board School pushed them, one by one, into the Parliamentary grant-aid system based on the results of government inspection; the advantage of this was that the money they received enabled them to improve their facilities, broaden their curriculum and keep their buildings in good shape, so maintaining their independent status outside the Board School system. The disadvantage was that, once in the thrall of the inspectorate, they had to keep working very hard to maintain the ever more-exacting standards.

CHAPTER 1

BEGINNINGS

There was much opposition towards Board Schools in the Chester Diocese, where Thornton School was situated. In order to keep up with the Education Department, the Diocesan Board of Education revamped itself, and a special fund was set up to award grants for buildings or for enlarging premises following the 1870 Education Act.⁵ In January, 1871, Thornton School was given £75 from this fund,⁶ and it seems to have been used for extending the building since, in 1874, a description of the school by the Rector explains that though the 1786 school had been enlarged in 1868:

This School was still insufficient for the requirements of the age, and further improvements have been made.

The Master's house is added to the School as a class room, and a new house erected for the Master.

These improvements have been made by subscription from several of the landed proprietors ... The Cholmondeley Charity, National Society, and Diocesan Board of Education, in addition to a Voluntary Rate paid by the Parishioners.⁷

Much as it tried to keep its schools independent, however, the Diocesan care of voluntary schools in Chester was always on a knife edge and, in January, 1879, they got approval to solicit subscriptions from the Boards of Management of schools

⁵ Cheshire County Records Office. Chester Diocesan Records, Board of Education Minutes 1867-1888, EDM 3/1, 27 Sept. 1870.

⁶ *Ibid.* 19 Dec. 1870.

⁷ T.F.Barker, *Some Account of the Parish of Thornton* (Chester 1874), p. 12.

inspected towards the cost of inspection. Thornton School was visited annually by the Diocesan Inspector whose comments were invariably benevolent towards it.

In 1875 the school at Thornton-le-Moors became a Parliamentary grant-aided school. The grant was "to aid local exertion ... to maintain ... Elementary Schools for children".⁸ The school would now have to submit to a yearly examination and inspection from Her Majesty's Inspectors "to verify the fulfilment of the conditions on which grants are made, to collect information, and to report the results to the Department".⁹

A Diary or Log Book was to be provided in which to enter, at least once a week:

... ordinary progress, visits of managers, and other facts concerning the school or its teachers, such as the dates of withdrawals, commencements of duty, cautions, illness, &c., which may require to be referred to at a future time, or may otherwise deserve to be recorded".¹⁰

The opening entry of the first Thornton school Log Book coincides with the re-opening of the school:

This school re-opened for instruction of Boys and Girls as a Public Elementary School within the meaning of the Elementary Education Act 1870, under the management of Mr Marmaduke Blezard (Probationer) and miss [*sic*] Elizabeth Chapman, Teacher of Sewing.¹¹

This Log Book, which forms the main evidence in support of the impact the Codes had on the school, is not a complete guide to the policies nor even to the weekly

⁸ Parliamentary Papers, *Report of the Committee of Council on Education, 1875-76* (London, 1876), p. 169.

⁹ *Ibid.* p. 170.

¹⁰ *Ibid.* p. 178.

¹¹ Log Book, 11 Jan. 1875.

events which governed its routine: major incidents were only entered when they were considered sufficiently important by the master. The Log Book cannot be thought of as providing comprehensive evidence of how this school was run in late Victorian times or of how quickly the national dictates affected them, but it can help to give us an insight into the development of the school, its problems and some of the social aspects which affected the children at the time.

There were 35 scholars admitted on the first day. The average attendance figure, quoted annually in the *Report*, was 38 in 1875-6, rose to a peak of 61 in 1880 and thereafter levelled out at between 40-50. More boys than girls came on the first day, with only nine girls attending; on the next day six more children were admitted. The Code recommended that the children be split into Standards which could be examined by the Inspector, and a table "Standards of Examination" was printed giving the expected level of achievement for each standard (see Appendix II). Mr Blezard split the children into standards and classes:

Classification =

Class 3	Standard I	8 children
" 2	" II	8 "
" 1	(" III	8 "
	(" IV	7 "
"	Infants	10 " ¹²

The Standards were the mechanism for part of the grant allocation. This changed over the years, but in 1875 the grant for each scholar, according to the average attendance, was four shillings, another shilling if the children were taught singing, and one

¹² Log Book, 12 Jan. 1875.

shilling if the discipline and organisation were satisfactory; three shillings were granted per pass in the elementary subjects (reading, writing and arithmetic) for every child over seven years of age who had attended at least 250 morning or afternoon meetings of the school; eight shillings were given for every infant who was present on the day of examination provided that they were being suitably taught. Class subjects (grammar, history, elementary geography and plain needlework), and the teaching of specific subjects (for example, advanced mathematics and botany) also qualified for grants.¹³ The maintenance of the school was financed by grants "conditional upon the attendance and proficiency of the scholars, the qualifications of the teachers, and the state of the schools."¹⁴ A good relationship was therefore necessary with the Managers, the people responsible for the financial running of the school, as well as for its staff and its premises. On the 22 January, 1875, Mr Blezard lists the Managers with their place of residence, showing that all five townships were represented; Elton, Hapsford and Wimbolds Trafford each had one manger, Dunham Hill had two, but Thornton had three, including the Rector, the same Rev.T.F.Barker who had written the description of the school one year earlier.

¹³ *C.C.E. Report, 1875-76*, pp. 172-174.

¹⁴ *C.C.E. Report, 1869-70*, pp. xxvi-xxvii.

CHAPTER 2

THE CURRICULUM

It is not always immediately apparent either from the Log Book or the minutes of the school Managers' Meetings that the annual Code had any effect on the functioning of the school at Thornton; but of the changes that do occur many can be seen, on examination, as a result of the rulings given in it. Before the school was linked into the national system through the inspectorate, the curriculum possibly consisted of nothing more adventurous than the elementary subjects. But from 1875 onwards the schoolmaster was under obligation to follow the new agenda, which broadened his remit as he prepared his children for the annual examination. But since the school's grant was dependent upon how well the children did, he had little encouragement to do more than keep to the given, but after all still limited, curriculum.

During the period 1875-1902 there were five successive masters, each one more regulated by the Education Department than the last, until the fifth, appointed in 1902, was automatically entering into the Log Book his "Scheme of Work" for the following year. The first, Mr. Blezard was a probationer with some training but possibly very little classroom experience. It was not until May, 1876, after his second annual inspection, that he could enter into the Log Book:

The Master received his Government Certificate (Second Class) yesterday, May
25th.

He had a succession of pupil-teachers to assist him, and the sewing was taken by Miss Chapman, who was possibly only 13 when appointed.¹⁵ She stayed on at the school until her marriage in 1886 having progressed, though apparently without any special training, to a position as infant teacher: "Miss Chapman to assist in teaching the infants daily except Fridays".¹⁶

The curriculum is partly recorded as the school settled down in its first year to the national standard. It is impossible to deduce exactly how the timetable worked, or why some subjects are mentioned but not others, but it would seem that Mr Blezard adopted a schedule of elementary subjects straightaway, and slowly introduced class subjects as he felt they could be incorporated into it. So he "Commenced teaching Mental Arithmetic & Geography to the first class" on 29th January and Religious Knowledge on 1st February. In the autumn of the same year several curriculum entries indicate that the system was developing at a faster rate: "Simple Proportion" was commenced for the fifth Standard on 5 November and they were initiated into "Analysis of a Simple Sentence" on the 19th; in December the whole school had special Geography lessons whilst, in November, "Special attention has been given to spelling in all the Standards during the week, as most of the children exhibit a weakness in this subject".¹⁷ Much importance was given to singing in the annual examination since it qualified for a grant, so it is not surprising that an early entry in the school's Log Book reads: "During the present week the 1st lesson each afternoon has been singing, chiefly solfeggio from Modulator".¹⁸

¹⁵ Cheshire County Record Office. Census Returns (1881). These show that Elizabeth B. Chapman was 20.

¹⁶ Log Book, 23 Apr. 1877.

¹⁷ Log Book, 19 Nov. 1875.

Many pitfalls could come between the school and its grant which could be reduced for, amongst other things, lax discipline, registration or instruction, or failure of the managers to keep the school well-maintained. Such clauses were often open to interpretation, although the Education Department did try to obtain uniformity of standard by convening its inspectors in conferences, the general object of which "was to concert measures whereby full effect may be given to the provisions of the Code ... to secure substantial uniformity of judgement and of practice throughout the divisions".¹⁹ Extra rules were added to some of the Codes and, in the very first Report of H.M. Inspectors, the school at Thornton fell foul of one of these:

The School has made a good start & promises to be thoroughly efficient. The Discipline is a little too lax. Great pains have been taken with the needlework. The building is in all respects suitable and convenient.

The 9th Supplementary Rule must in future be strictly observed.²⁰

This Rule states that:

A deduction of at least one tenth will be made from the grant to a Day School in which children are retained after the age of 10, unless one *class* - i.e. all who are to be examined as members of one class, according to Rule 5 - be presented *above* Standard II.²¹

Since there is no mention in the H.M.I. Report of any reduction in the grant it seems safe to assume that this was only a warning; after all, the school had only been in the Grants scheme for six months, and diphtheria in one of the local villages had affected attendance for three of those. Although Mr Blezard had divided the older children up

¹⁸ Log Book, 18 Feb. 1875.

¹⁹ *C.C.E. Report, 1889-90*, p. 172.

²⁰ Log Book, 28 June, 1875.

²¹ *C.C.E. Report, 1875-76*, p. 193.

into classes, the epidemic would have made the teaching of each group of children to examination standard in such a short space of time virtually impossible.

This first report of the inspectors was an optimistic one and the diligence of the master seems to have paid off a year later. The school, in 1876, was thought to be progressing "in a very favourable manner", the order was good and the children clean and well-mannered; it was only the arithmetic of the upper Standards which was "weak and requires great care".²² Again, it seems hard to castigate the teacher for this failing, since many of these were children would not have had the same systematic grounding in arithmetic that a child brought up in school from the age of five would have had. These early reports do, however, seem to reflect a tolerance towards the school which is absent in later reports. The actual subjects taught are scarcely touched upon, but the behaviour of the children is praised as well as their cleanliness.

After 1876, the Reports become more critical. Marmaduke Blezard remained as master until July, 1880, during which time the Standards of Examination changed very little. All the reports question the academic progress, especially as regards arithmetic. In 1877 spelling and arithmetic were in need of improvement as well as the geography of the younger pupils, and things were so bad in 1878 that "defective instruction" caused the grant to be reduced by one-tenth, even though there were "signs of careful & intelligent teaching"; arithmetic was generally neat but inaccurate and "Geography and Grammar are not equal to the requirements".²³ Geography improved the following year, but was "scarcely satisfactory", and reading could only

²² Log Book, 31 Mar. 1876.

²³ Log Book, 8 June, 1878.

be classed as poor. "The third Standard is weak in all subjects. Grammar fails wholly; Geography is imperfect. The Infants should be more advanced."²⁴ Illness amongst the children had dogged Mr Blezard's years as master, but shortly after this last report of 1880 he tendered his resignation. He had respected the Code in as far as it could relate to his school, commencing the geography of countries in Europe in July, 1876, compound addition to Standard III, reduction of Avoirdupois weight to Standard IV and compound proportion to Standard VI just after the 1876 inspection. History and Drawing were begun in 1878, and for the best spellers, the reward of finishing school at 3 o'clock was given on 21 September, 1878. At the end of his time in Thornton, the school had been thoroughly initiated into the routine of public elementary education.

In the *Report of the Committee of Council on Education* for 1878, H.M. Inspector E.M. Sneyd-Kynnersley discussed his own examination techniques in the Chester area. He would leave the teacher in charge whilst he watched the instruction; in this way he could judge how well the pupils reacted to the discipline of the teacher. He felt this was a much better method of establishing the effectiveness of the teaching than by using the traditional technique of testing all the scholars individually whilst the teacher stood by watching. He thought that the children reacted badly to the authority of the inspector, and their very unease made it impossible to judge how well the school was doing. But, if the teacher were allowed to take the lessons in the normal way, he

presumably extracts what they know; at least he puts them at their ease. I then follow on the points omitted ...

Still more useful again, is this system in dealing with infant schools, for these timid creatures, finding they have to do with their ordinary teacher, and that the stranger is

²⁴ Log Book, 4 June, 1880.

merely looking on, are at their ease. The discipline ... is fully tested ...²⁵

It is interesting to note that, in his anecdotal book *H.M.I: Some Passages in the Life of one of H.M. Inspectors of Schools*, Sneyd-Kynnersley has written about the "rough principles" which regulated the school reports:

The first was that a good school would do with a very few words: a bad school required many stripes. The second was that one should begin with the good points (if any), and then proceed more gracefully to the bad points. But if the place were thoroughly bad, it was thought wise to begin and end with denunciation, sandwiching a few words of faint praise about the middle.²⁶

Perhaps the early reports on Thornton School only needed a few words because it mostly fulfilled the standard required. Certainly criticisms were only ever introduced after at least one sentence of praise.

The 1880 Education Act "imposed the compulsory attendance of all children between the ages of five and ten and thereafter until fourteen, unless exemption could be gained on grounds of educational attainment or of average level of attendance".²⁷ This meant that there were more children in the school, an extra Standard (Standard VII), and more pressure on the financial and staffing resources of the school.

The Census Returns of 1881 show that George Kirkby, the next Master of the school, was only 23, so it is possible that he was only twenty-two when he succeeded Marmaduke Blezard in 1880.²⁸ Of all the masters in the period of this study, his stay

²⁵ C.C.E. Report, 1878-79, pp. 608-9.

²⁶ E.M. Sneyd-Kynnersley, *H.M.I: Some Passages in the Life of one of H.M. Inspectors of Schools* (London, 1910), p. 223.

²⁷ Pamela Horn, *The Victorian Country Child* (Stroud, 1985), p.viii.

²⁸ Census Returns (1881).

of seventeen years was the longest. His entries in the Log Book show that he had a steady command of the school, and the reports, though perhaps getting more critical as the inspectorate tightened its grip, show him able to cope with the many trials which he had to face. He had already had experience of teaching, as first assistant in a Free Grammar School, and by May 1882 was signing himself as "Certificated teacher of the 2nd Class". Eleven days after his sewing mistress left, the Log Book notes "This morning Mrs Kirkby (Ex PT) [Pupil-Teacher] began duty as Assistant and Sewing Mistress".²⁹

From the Inspector's point of view the school develops fairly satisfactorily: it is never an "excellent" school in the terms of their reckoning, but it has no fierce "denunciation" either. Arithmetic, as always, continued to attract criticism, and frequently the reading was done in a monotone; singing was sometimes fair and sometimes harsh. Two reports stand out, one for its brevity, and one for the positive commendations:

Order & Instruction good.

The Infants are well taught.³⁰

.....

The elementary work is for the most part remarkably even and good: there is some weakness in the arithmetic of the Fifth Standard, but, on the whole, the higher grant is fairly earned. English generally good. Needlework good.³¹

In the May before Mr Blezard's departure, the Rector of the village, as Correspondant Manager, issued a notice that the children are "expected to purchase" their own

²⁹ Log Book, 27 Apr. 1885.

³⁰ Log Book, 12 May, 1890.

³¹ Log Book, 13 June, 1894.

reading books in future",³² a sentence which clearly indicates the difficulties experienced by the school managers in raising sufficient money for the school. Thornton School was forced to levy a local rate every now and then to keep their finances in credit, but obviously other means were also used to make sure that the pupils had the necessary books. This particular attempt was not very successful: two weeks after the Rector's ultimatum, a consignment of books was received and sent to the Treasurer of the School. Mr Blezard "ordered the children to get their books from him at once";³³ by 4th June: "Very few of the children have purchased Reading Books". Mr Kirkby was left to deal with the situation. Eighteen months later he made a caustic comment in the Log Book:

Owing [to] the difficulty in inducing the Managers to provide the requisite books for teaching Geography the Master has decided to take only one class subject viz. Grammar.³⁴

Nothing more is heard about the inaccessibility of books, but about two years later a library "for the use of the Parish & also of the scholars belonging to the school" was opened "every other Friday evening at 4 p.m."³⁵ The concentration on Grammar, however, had little effect: "Grammar fails" was the comment of 24th May, 1882, four months after Mr Kirkby jettisoned geography for grammar.

In the *Report of the Committee of Council on Education* for 1875-76, there is a comment on the use of drill in schools:

³² Log Book, 24 May, 1880

³³ Log Book, 28 May 1880.

³⁴ Log Book, 24 Jan. 1882.

³⁵ Log Book, 7 Dec. 1883.

... *military drill*, which (as distinguished from the ordinary school drill practised in every good school) was introduced by the New Code, is systematically taught, with more or less satisfactory results, to boys attending 1,001 day schools.³⁶

There was no military drill during Mr Kirkby's time at the school, but, in 1890, the usual routine was "varied for a few minutes each day by the introduction of 'Musical Drill'."³⁷ Military Drill is introduced by the next Master in the second week of his tenureship. Mr Kirkby's notes in the Log Book about the curriculum are very limited, although, on 28th February, 1891, an entry suggests that he was becoming concerned about the forthcoming examination: "Paid much attention to the Reading of St. IV during the week - partly from the 'School Newspaper' "; again, this emphasis on one subject had little effect, since the next examination in May brought the following comment: "Reading is generally wanting in expression".³⁸

Drawing was introduced as an examinable subject in the early 1890s:

It is a condition of the grant that the older boys (if any) in the school shall be taught

Drawing. Grants for this are made by the Science and Art Department.³⁹

In 1892 Thornton School "Received papers from Inspector of Drawing relating to the exam in that subject".⁴⁰ The examination took place in March and the "Inspector classed the work of the Lower Standards as 'Excellent' "; this was a term not used lightly by H.M.I.s, but the Drawing Inspector was from a different stable. When, in March, 1895, three boys from Standard VII were entered by the school for merit cards in the Drawing exam they were all successful.

³⁶ *C.C.E. Report, 1875-76*, p. xiii.

³⁷ Log Book, 14 Jan. 1890.

³⁸ Log Book, 14 May, 1891.

³⁹ *C.C.E. Report, 1892-93*, p.444.

⁴⁰ Log Book, 22 Jan. 1892.

There were vast changes in the curriculum during Mr Kirkby's seventeen years as master. In comparing the Schedule for the Standards of Examination for 1879 and 1894, immediate differences can be seen in the extensive nature of the latter.⁴¹ The table of 1879 includes both elementary and class subjects printed on one page, whilst in 1894 just the elementary subjects needed a double-page spread. Alternative schemes for arithmetic are introduced including a scheme "S" which "is intended for small schools in which the average attendance of older scholars does not exceed 60", the scheme which undoubtedly the Thornton School adopted. Here the Standards are grouped together into stages, a suggestion already made to Thornton in the H.M.I. Report of 1888: "Mr Kirkby should make more use of his power of grouping two or more Standards for Reading and Recitation; much time and trouble would be saved in this way".⁴² The advantages of this method would be that pupils could be examined at the stage they had reached within the Schedule, not according to age. Since a child was not allowed to be examined in the same standard for two consecutive years, this system took the pressure off the teaching of pupils who were slower than others of their age.

Reading guidelines had become more specific between 1879 and 1894: books on the history of England were introduced as examination reading in Standard IV and upwards, and Shakespeare's historical plays from Standard VI, instead of merely "Reading with fluency and expression".⁴³ "Word-building" was preferred to "Spelling" in the schedule for writing in 1894, and poetry was included for Standard IV. Both

⁴¹ *C.C.E. Report, 1878-79*, p.373; *1893-94*, pp. 344-345.

⁴² *Log Book*, 7 May, 1888.

⁴³ *C.C.E. Report, 1879*, p.373.

Class and Specific Subjects had several double-spread sheets of their own Schedules printed in the *Report*, with a note that "Managers are not restricted to the use of any of the schemes given in Schedule II" [Class Subjects].⁴⁴ The academic basis of the curriculum does indeed seem to have moved on from a purely elementary ability to read and write, into a more aesthetic ability to appreciate the standard authors; the broadening of the curriculum, however, albeit with a greater flexibility of approach, must have created great pressure on the one teacher.

Mr Kirkby seems to have been away several times himself through illness, but it comes as a shock to read the following entry in the Log Book in the late autumn term, 1893:

This morning the school was closed owing to the sudden death of Mrs Kirkby.⁴⁵

Mr Kirkby stayed on for three years after this, having run the school effectively and reasonably efficiently during his tenure.

In 1895 Article 84 (b) of the Code "allowed the Inspector to substitute two visits without notice during the year for a single pre-arranged examination visit".⁴⁶ The effect on Thornton School is only visible from 1897 when two visits did occur, but for the rest of this period, three or four visits were made annually and a close surveillance was kept on the school. When Charles Ward, the next Master, started his term of office we notice a different approach. He immediately examined the children

⁴⁴ *C.C.E. Report, 1893-93*, pp. 344-353.

⁴⁵ Log Book, 18 Dec. 1893.

⁴⁶ Gillian Sutherland, *Policy-making in Elementary Education 1870-1895* (London, 1973), p. 329.

and specified what the next year's recitation and object lessons were to be. There is also a noticeable interference in the curriculum for the first time by the inspector:

Recitation for the following year.

Infants and Standard I "The Father's Return"

Standards II & III "The May Queen"

Standards IV, V, VI & VII "The Lay of the Last Minstrel", "*King John*"⁴⁷

"King John" must be a later entry, since after the following day's visit of the inspector an alteration was necessary and duly entered in the book:

According to Instructions from W.Ballance Esq. H.M.I. the Poetry for the Upper

Standards will be altered to "King John" and Object Lesson To Course C.⁴⁸

The object lessons were introduced as the basis of a "regular course of simple conversational lessons for infants" and should have been listed in the Log Book from 1884;⁴⁹ Course C consisted of: Squirrel, Cat, Fox, Rabbit, Cow, Horse, Sheep, Tea, Coffee, Cocoa, Owl, Cuckoo, Bees, Cotton, Wool, Iron, Salt, Coal, Trees, Flax, Cork, Sugar, Wheat, Matches, Lead Pencil, Knife, Needle, Sun, Umbrella, Candle. After this burst of enthusiasm, Mr Ward's entries are a catalogue of absences, departures and school excursions until he resigns a year later to take up an appointment in Lancaster. We are left with the feeling that a rural village school is too remote a scene for a teacher of his potential. The master who follows, John Evans, also begins with enthusiasm; he notes down the weaknesses of his scholars. He "examined Children in the usual subjects of Examination. Arithmetic is weak throughout. Infants are very backward, probably owing to irregularity of attendance".⁵⁰ He, too, lists the poetry recitation and the object lessons.

⁴⁷ Log Book, 21 Apr. 1897.

⁴⁸ Log Book, 22 Apr. 1897.

⁴⁹ *C.C.E. Report*, 1884-85, p. 151.

The school now took on a different character: external influences imposed themselves quite directly upon it. A lecturer came annually from the Band of Hope and Temperance Union to give a "Temperance Science lesson" to the older pupils, and awarded certificates for excellence afterwards to the writers of the best essays on the subject. An operetta was given in November, 1898, by the children to an audience in the Parish Room at which £3 7s 0d profit was made for the school. Other lecturers came from outside to talk to the children, but the Master's initial aspirations were hindered by the fact that he was the only teacher; no matter how efficient he tried to be, the reports of H.M. Inspectors were not favourable. After two fair ones they began to deteriorate. Sneyd-Kynnersley's dictum about the length of report is in evidence in the third year of Mr Evans's reign:

Visited school - Art 84 (b)

Present 31

The order is generally good although at times the Infants are troublesome. Care should also be taken if chn [sic] are set the same tests that they work honestly - they should also be taught to march in school smartly and quietly - Mr Evans has a difficult task here teaching single-handed seven standards besides infants - if a Probationer ... were provided it would be a help - The work on the whole is creditably advanced.

Composition is however not well taught - object lessons are very poor and writing throughout will require particular attention. In the lower section of the school more Mental Arithmetic coupled with good lessons on Composition of nos should be given and in Sts IV etc the chn should be taught to dispense with all unnecessary lengthy processes and to work neatly. The log should be more systematically and regularly kept - the Admission Register is not properly complete - the Summary is a

week in arrear.⁵¹

It was at this time that an entry in the Register of Baptisms of Thornton-le-Moors Church shows a son, a fourth child, born to Mr Evans, and it seems likely that life was difficult at home as well as in school.⁵² The H.M.I. reprimand brought a renewed effort from Mr Evans: "Analysis of a Simple Sentence" was begun the following week and special attention "given to writing and composition in the Upper Standards. The latter subject was taught on the plan suggested by Mr Ballance H.M.Sub-Inspector".⁵³ But when Sneyd-Kynnersley visited without notice in March, the Log Book and the Summary were both three weeks in arrears. The inspection report was better in 1900 and the higher grant, a grant now given for suitable provision of elementary subjects, object lessons and varied occupations, was recommended "with hesitation".⁵⁴

These "visits without notice" made by H.M.I.s Sneyd-Kynnersley and Ballance show that Mr Evans was finding it hard to keep to the routine of the timetable, although the Diocesan Inspector's report of the same year remarks "It is evident that care and pains are taken and this little school deserves credit".⁵⁵ In December, another H.M.I. visit notes that the timetable must be adhered to, that the New Code, which now required elementary geography lessons, should be worked to, and that after eight months of the school year the syllabus of Instruction was still incomplete. Although a probationer was appointed at the beginning of 1901 to make teaching easier, when Mr Ballance

⁵¹ Log Book, 24 Nov. 1899.

⁵² Cheshire County Record Office. Baptism Register of Thornton-le-Moors (1861-1901), 22 Oct. 1899. Mf 166 / 2 / 3.

⁵³ Log Book, 1 Dec. 1899.

⁵⁴ *C.C.E. Report. 1892-93*, p. 315.

⁵⁵ Log Book, 28 Aug. 1900.

visited in April the younger children were still not working to timetable. The two more visits by H.M.I. that year are highly critical of the lack of method and preparation put into the work, and it was obvious that Mr Evans was not able to cope with the rising tide of illness and bad sanitary conditions, and the impossibility of teaching seven classes with very little help. An entry in the Log Book reveals a rare insight into the man himself. Although "No reflections or opinions of a general character are to be entered in the Log Book",⁵⁶ the master made this entry with impunity:

Last night the snowstorm was renewed with exceptional severity, and this morning the snow is lying under a beautifully clean, white layer of frozen and sparkling snow. The Registers were not marked.⁵⁷

The final blow came on 29 May, 1902: this time, when the Inspector called, Mr Evans received no mercy:

Everything here is wanting in neatness; the schoolroom is as untidy as the paperwork; the writing is very poor, and the formation of figures is equally faulty. The Arithmetic of the first class is dull and unintelligent. Geography is taught without proper maps and with poor results. The syllabus of instruction and the records of work done are imperfectly kept. The whole work is done without method and without energy, and the children are being brought up in habits of slovenly work.⁵⁸

Mr Evans resigned on 30 September, 1902, "with best wishes for [the school's] future prosperity".

The Managers, during this time, were finding it increasingly difficult to fund the school adequately. An application for a Diocesan Grant was made in early 1900

⁵⁶ *C.C.E. Report, 1875-76*, p. 178.

⁵⁷ Log Book, 12 Feb. 1902.

⁵⁸ Log Book, 29 May, 1902.

allowing repairs to the closets and playground to be done.⁵⁹ Since there had been a deficit in the year's accounts of £4 8s 2½d, the Managers deferred the question of appointing a probationer, as recommended by Mr Ballance, until the annual Meeting; this was despite the reading-out of Sneyd-Kynnersley's report of a visit in July without notice, when he found the master unable to keep to the timetable or to control the children properly by himself.⁶⁰ When Mr Evans was asked to explain the irregularities he blamed them on the Inspector's visit which had caused him to keep the children in so that they could be questioned. The Managers assured Mr Evans of their goodwill towards him: "their only wish was to have the work of the school efficiently done, and to incur no fines from H.M. Inspector's disapproval".⁶¹

In January 1901 the Managers appointed an ex-pupil as Probationer at the salary of £8 a year which was a lot less than the £40 a year that they thought an approved assistant might require. This improved the teaching situation, but the financial situation was only to be resolved by the levying of a voluntary rate on the townships of 1d in the pound which did not find favour with some villagers:

Something over £4 was collected, the great majority of the parishioners cheerfully contributing. The refusals of Mr George Lloyd, Mr Joseph Lloyd, Mr Thomas Hatton and Mr Joseph Morris in Elton; Mr Thomas Jeffs of Thornton and Mr Richard Jeffs of Wimbolds Trafford, and Mr Ball; created some surprise, as most of them are considerable ratepayers and should be interested in the welfare of the local school.⁶²

⁵⁹ Managers' Meetings, 8 Jan. 1900.

⁶⁰ Log Book, 6 July, 1900.

⁶¹ Managers' Meetings, 3 Sept. 1900.

⁶² Log Book, under date 20 Feb. 1901, but this report must have been added later since the collection date was 6 March, 1901.

The formation of the County Councils in 1888, followed by that of the Urban and Rural District Councils in 1894 meant that householders had to pay rates, and some were obviously reluctant to be asked to pay more for the school, a situation which was only resolved when the County Councils took over the running of local education in 1902 and voluntary rates were no longer necessary.

The last Managers' Meeting held before Mr Evans's resignation took place in January, 1902, when an H.M.I. Report from the previous October was read. The comments are valuable: they show another view of the situation and include further information. The Report, it states:

was not creditable, but the small attendance (33) was discouraging to a teacher, especially as over a dozen Thornton children went to Ince, where they were not wanted. The chairman said Mr Evans seemed more anxious than formerly to adapt himself to the needs of the district.⁶³

The Managers seem, in this case, reluctant to shoulder any responsibility for the difficulties experienced by the master in teaching the whole school himself. Criticism is also implied in the sheet sent to each household in the three townships of Elton, Thornton and Wimbolds Trafford: "in spite of the small number of scholars in attendance, a Probationer has been added to the staff by the advice of H.M. Inspector".⁶⁴

⁶³ Managers' Meetings, 7 Jan. 1902.

⁶⁴ Printed sheet inserted in the Minutes of the Managers' Meetings, dated 4 March, 1901.

CHAPTER 3

THE MANAGERS

The Managers were the controlling body of the voluntary school. In *H.M.I.*, Sneyd-Kynnersley defines the managers' job: it included "the appointment of teachers, general supervision of the process of Education, upkeep of the fabric, and paying the bills".⁶⁵ Made up mostly of the local Rector, substantial landowners, tradesmen, farmers and the local squire, they were often the embodiment of the agricultural section of the community, whose livelihood frequently depended on the employment of cheap, often child, labour. The Managers of Thornton School were mainly farmers, with the Rector always taking a lead part, usually as the Corresponding Manager through whom all official correspondence went. Thornton was lucky in its early managers: they were a dedicated group determined to keep the school a Church, rather than a Board, School. In 1877 they unanimously carried a proposal "that the [Dunham and Thornton] Schools be managed under the present system and not transferred to a School Board".⁶⁶ In July, 1880:

It was resolved that the Rector and Mr Bower call on those who have not paid the school rate in Thornton and Elton to inform them that their refusal to pay will result in the necessity of a School Board.⁶⁷

Their control of the school was advantageous both to the village, since if the school were well run there would be no need for outside interference, and to themselves:

⁶⁵ Sneyd-Kynnersley, *H.M.I.* p. 122.

⁶⁶ Managers' Meetings, 26 Jan. 1877.

⁶⁷ Managers' Meetings, 19 July, 1880.

when managers had a vested interest in the land they could turn a blind eye to the contravening of the "compulsory" clause so that children could pick mushrooms, "drop" potatoes or gather fruit, occupations frequently cited in the Log Book as reasons for absenteeism. Had the school been under the management of a School Board, no such leniency would have been tolerated.

Generally speaking the Managers seem to have interfered little with the day-to-day running of the school. Mr Blezard and Mr Kirkby were included in the list of Managers, although Mr Ward and Mr Evans are not present at any meetings. There were usually six to nine managers present at the early meetings but often only three at the later ones; it seems as if, as the Education Department's involvement with the school subordinated their managerial influence, only those who had to answer to the higher authority felt obliged to go. Some of the meetings were public ones, open to all parishioners, and it is evidence of a strong community spirit that eighteen villagers, all men, turned up to prevent the school being transferred to a School Board.

Most of the business carried on by the Managers was concerned with the financial aspects of the school and with the state of the building. The school was supported initially by fees, the Children's Pence, which augmented the government grant. Since the minute book of the Managers' Meetings only starts on 8 August, 1876, we have to rely on Log Book entries for any earlier information, and on 29 March, 1875, it records a change from the previous fees of 4d. and 6d. per week for the children of farmers and tradesmen, respectively, and 2d. for those of labourers to a flat rate of 2d. per week for each child. These rates were constantly changing, however, until the

school became free in 1891, and voluntary rates were often levied to supplement them so as to pay for a variety of extras, including papering the master's house and supplying him with a new desk and a set of natural history prints and wall pictures.

The teacher's salary was under constant review. In 1878, at a meeting at which Mr Blezard was present, a proposal that a fixed salary be paid to the master and that he "state what salary he requires" was withdrawn.⁶⁸ The following year, however:

It was unanimously agreed that Mr Blezard receive £70 for the next 12 months payable quarterly and such further sum as the Managers may have in hand at the end of the School Year to the value of £100 inclusive of House rent.⁶⁹

This was a reasonable salary for a school master, but the financial situation of the school was a fluctuating one and the salary changed accordingly. It seems to have stayed at £70 p.a. with house until 1891 when the Managers voted Mr Kirkby a rise of £10 and another £4 p.a. for "the cleaning of the school, lighting the fires etc and to find materials for the same".⁷⁰ In 1896 the main concern was still the master's salary and just what should be paid from it:

It was stated that the salary of the schoolmaster was £110 of which he paid £4 to the school cleaner, and £16 to the assistant mistress. Mr Lee said this £4 was no part of the Master's salary: it would be correct to say that the Master's salary was £90 and house free, the other payment being made by Managers. He would propose that an additional £4 per annum be granted to the assistant mistress, to date from 25 Dec. 1895. Mr Lloyd said he believed the funds of the school could just bear this additional charge.⁷¹

⁶⁸ Managers' Meetings, 11 Apr. 1878.

⁶⁹ Managers' Meetings, 3 Apr. 1879.

⁷⁰ Managers' Meetings, 12 May, 1891.

⁷¹ Managers' Meetings, 31 Jan. 1896.

When Mr Ward resigned, the advertisement for the vacancy in December, 1897, specified a reduced salary of £80 and house, so it seems that the finances of the school were still critical, and they certainly did not improve during Mr Evans's tenure;⁷² the grant itself was not sufficient for the outlay demanded by new government regulations which were constantly undermining economic stability. The alienation of the Inspectorate towards the school was partly responsible for the reduction of the grant, but this in turn reduced the ability of the school to keep up the standards required by the government. In 1889-90 the Rules for "planning and fitting up" Public Elementary Schools were printed in the annual Report, and the requirements must have been a financial headache for those managers whose schools were built in the eighteenth century. In some districts the dimensions of a school room might only be a little short of the requirements, but walls, even old, thick stone walls, had to be altered to get the dimensions right.⁷³ In the H.M.I. Report of 1893, the walls are said to be below the minimum thickness allowed by Rule 4 (d) of Schedule VIII of the Code, and "The managers should consider whether [they] cannot be thickened".⁷⁴ There is no reported action over this. Seaborne and Lowe, in *The English School*, write:

... the vast programme of building and improvements after 1870 weakened the voluntary sector by spreading scarce resources more thinly ... attempts by the Education Department in the 1880s to bring voluntary premises up to standard concentrated on hygienic conditions and space per scholar instead of more important school organisation.⁷⁵

⁷² Managers' Meetings. Two newspaper cuttings, dated 18 Dec. 1897 and 24 Dec. 1897, inserted between entries for 11 May, 1897 and 3 Jan. 1898.

⁷³ Seaborne and Lowe, *The English School*, p. 12.

⁷⁴ Log Book, 5 May, 1893.

⁷⁵ Seaborne and Lowe, *The English School*, p. 22.

In January, 1893, a circular was sent to H.M. Inspectors from the Education Department requesting that they report on the condition of the schools. It states that "any serious defect in the convenience of the school for teaching purposes or in its sanitation should be brought under notice, both of the managers and of the Department, with a view to its immediate removal".⁷⁶ In 1898, when Mr Evans was struggling to keep the school going without any assistance, and as numbers were shrinking, and therefore bringing in less grant, the painting, plastering and roofing demanded by the inspectors consumed much of the school's resources. A £5 grant had been given by the Diocesan Association "which must be expended in repairs".⁷⁷ There was no money spare to get extra teaching help.

Gillian Sutherland, in *Policy Making in Elementary Education, 1870 -1895*, explains how important it was for a master to maintain the good opinion of the Inspector, or his career could be wrecked. She quotes from the Cross Report: "if [H.M.I.] gives an unfavourable report on the school no manager could afford to keep the man so reported".⁷⁸ And yet it was possibly to save money that Mr Evans was appointed: he was chosen out of nine applicants, even though he had had not been to a Training College; he had good testimonials, however, and "his application was very neatly written ... He is very musical and has composed a service for the Magnificat".⁷⁹

⁷⁶ *C.C.E. Report 1892-93*, p. 482.

⁷⁷ *Managers' Meetings*, 3 Jan. 1898.

⁷⁸ "Cross Minutes P.P. 1887", p. xxix q. 17269, quoted in Gillian Sutherland, *Policy-making in Elementary Education 1870-1895* (London, 1973), p. 67.

⁷⁹ *Managers' Meetings*, 3 Jan. 1898.

Obviously the Education Department recognised the importance of amenable surroundings for the children, and stipulated in its annual Code that a grant could only be paid if:

The school premises are healthy, well lighted, warmed, drained, and ventilated, properly furnished, supplied with suitable offices ...⁸⁰

Although the Log Book recorded some new developments: "The condition of the playground has been very much improved by their being covered with broken mugs and cinders",⁸¹ it was by no means consistent, depending on the inclinations of the master. Such a small item as the cap hooks, which the Code of 1890 recommended to be twelve inches apart in two layers and with a separate peg numbered for each child, do feature, however. Two rows were fixed up in the schoolroom within the first fortnight of opening, and in July 1876 they were "placed on window side of porch"; in 1880 they were broken by the fall of the rail. What effect the 1890 regulations had on them is not recorded, although the Inspector's report of 1893 suggests that nothing happened: "Cloak Room accommodation should be provided".⁸²

The drains and the school yard are a recurring problem. After the cinders and broken mugs, which might have disguised rather than obliterated the problem, a drain had to be put in from the porch

... to the back of the school, passing behind the closets into the neighbouring ditch.

Spouting has also been supplied to the back of the school, there having been none previously. These alterations are made with a view of preventing the dampness of the school room, which has been very bad of late.⁸³

⁸⁰ *C.C.E. Report, 1875-76*, p.171.

⁸¹ Log Book, 29 Jan. 1875.

⁸² Log Book, 5 May, 1893.

⁸³ Log Book, 6 Jan, 1877.

This action seems to have cured the problem until 1892 when the H.M.I. Report specified that the school yard needed draining, and in the report of 1899: "The drains in the offices are choked and smell badly ... these matters should receive immediate attention".⁸⁴ This report was discussed in the annual meeting of the Managers in the following year:

The Managers consented to these matters being attended to, and thought the playground should be covered with cinders and gravel, as the rain seemed to have some difficulty in draining off it, and the surface was always damp.⁸⁵

The drains' problem recurred in 1902 when, because of an outbreak of diphtheria, the Nuisance Inspector came to look at them, but the Managers seem to have been too concerned by the bad H.M.I. Reports and the appointing of a new Master to record these facts in the Minute Book. It was suggested by the Nuisance Inspector that "more ashes should be thrown down the closet, and the Drains flushed once a week".⁸⁶ When Mr Ballance visited the following week he had far more substantial suggestions to make:

(1) The drain leading from the boys' urinal to the cesspool should be trapped - (2) some top ventilation should be provided in the girls' closets - (3) as the ashpit is connected with the boys' & girls' closets the rain should not be allowed to enter as the stagnant water then constitutes a serious danger.⁸⁷

It is interesting to note that the Memorandum issued in the *Report* for 1879-80 on the "Means of Excrement Disposal of School Premises" had no immediate impact on the annual inspections. A tiled floor, however, was a cause of unease at the time: in April, 1879, it was "not fit for a Pupil Teacher to stand on" and the following year, in June,

⁸⁴ Log Book, 24 Nov. 1899.

⁸⁵ Managers' Meetings, 8 Jan. 1900.

⁸⁶ Log Book, 2 May, 1902.

⁸⁷ Log Book, 9 May, 1902.

"The tiled floor has not yet been removed". By May, 1882, the work had been done to the satisfaction of the Inspector: "The premises have been greatly improved by the removal of the tiled floor". H.M. Inspector also approved the replacement of the hedge by a boundary wall with a wicket or gate "of sufficient width to admit a cart for the getting in of coal etc for the uses of the school and the Master's house".⁸⁸

During Mr Blezard's tenure, cleaning and whitewashing the school was an annual event, with four of the schoolgirls doing the work in November, 1877. But in 1879 a cleaner was engaged to clean the school, scrub the floor, sweep and dust each week and light the fires; after this the yearly cleaning entry stops.⁸⁹ In 1894 warning notices were issued by H.M.I. about the temperature inside the schoolroom "which should be made satisfactory".⁹⁰ In November, 1890, Mr Kirkby had complained in the Log Book that:

... as the person employed as school cleaner by the managers seldom lights the fires

before 8.30 the school at 9 o'clock has been actually unfit for the children to sit in.

This (Friday) morning there was no fire lit in the large room till 5 minutes to 9.⁹¹

As a result of the Inspector's advice a new stove was installed which, in spite of the bad weather that winter, made the school comfortably warm.

Advice is also given by the Inspectors on the positioning of the rail used by the infants to lean on, and the reconstruction of the gallery, "making the steps 2ft 3ins deep and 4 inches high".⁹² This was only discussed at the Managers' Meetings fifteen

⁸⁸ Managers' Meetings, 12 May, 1891.

⁸⁹ Managers' Meetings, 1 Jan. 1879.

⁹⁰ Log Book, 13 Jun. 1894.

⁹¹ Log Book, 28 Nov. 1890.

⁹² Log Book, 15 Oct. 1897.

months later, when one of the Managers, a blacksmith, volunteered to alter them. During the early years, the Managers met at least three times a year, and as much as seven times in 1880. There are only two entries in the Minutes from 1883 to 1896. But in 1881, 1882, 1890, 1891, 1898, and 1899, as far as we can tell, they met only once; so the suggestion about the infants' rail in 1897, not mentioned in 1898 because of the financial problems and applications for the master's job, was only discussed at the following year's meeting. One of the Managers confessed that the last time he had visited the school, Mrs Kirkby was teaching sewing, which must have been at least three years earlier.⁹³ It was recommended in the Code of 1890 that the managers check the registers at irregular intervals and at least once a quarter, and record this in the Log Book.⁹⁴ Admittedly there had been two visits by the Rector from 1893-1896, as the Log Book shows, but a closer relationship with the school might have been expected of the Managers.

⁹³ Managers' Meetings, 13 Dec. 1896.

⁹⁴ *C.C.E. Report, 1889-90*, p. 194.

CHAPTER 4

ATTENDANCE

The health of the children is illustrated in dramatic simplicity by the Log Book. Epidemics are entered one after another, and though there appear to be only two deaths of pupils during the whole of this 27 year period, mortality seems never far away. At the end of January, 1875, an entry tells of low attendance figures due to "the outbreak of a fever (diphtheria) in the village of Dunham Hill - from whence a large proportion of children come - several children suffering from the epidemic".⁹⁵ The first death occurred shortly after this, within two months of the school opening:

Feb. 18, 1875.

Sent Joseph Asbury home at 3.45 p.m. He complained early in the afternoon of being unwell, and being afraid that he was suffering from diphtheria which is very prevalent in the neighbourhood of his home, I separated him from the rest of the children, and my suspicions being verified that it was a case of diphtheria, I sent him home.

Feb. 22, 1875.

... Joseph Asbury died after four days' illness, see, entry February 18th.⁹⁶

It was almost a fortnight later that the Medical Officer of the Rural Sanitary Authority came out from Chester to visit the school, and requested that Dunham Hill children should stay at home for at least a month:

⁹⁵ Log Book, 29 Jan. 1875.

⁹⁶ Log Book, 18 and 22 February, 1875.

or until such time as the Medical Authority recommend ...This course is taken, with a view to prevent if possible the spread of infection to the district of Thornton where no cases of diphtheria have as yet been reported.⁹⁷

This outbreak was severe, and it was not until the end of April that Dunham Hill children were allowed to return. The annual inspection, the school's first, was put off from its designated April date to June.

Another death occurred in 1879 when Sarah Jane Nield died of an unspecified contagious disease: previously the children in the house had been advised to stay at home, according to the Log Book. It was in this way that the school fulfilled its function of responsibility to the community, as caretaker of its health. The vaccinating officer visited the school twice during 1875-1902, though H.M.I. Sneyd-Kynnersley inserted a curt entry on 3 May, 1881:

The vaccinating authority have no right whatever to take possession of the school without permission of the trustees or managing Committee.

It was not until 1898 that the school is used again for this purpose. In neither entry does it specify that it was the children who were vaccinated, in which case Sneyd-Kynnersley might have been justified in his comment. The school was closed four times in this period because of epidemics, and the Log Book reveals, as might be expected, a prevalence of illness between the months of October and May. One entry records that many children were away from school due to sickness or sore feet; this was due, perhaps, to ill-fitting footwear (or none at all) or possibly to the abominable state of the roads in the area.⁹⁸ Another entry the previous autumn states that one girl

⁹⁷ Log Book, 4 Mar. 1875.

⁹⁸ Log Book, 10 Jan. 1879.

was being kept away from school because of the bad condition of the roads; there are several instances of roads being so water-logged or impassable through snow that the children could not attend.

Since the 1870 Education Act had very little effect on those parents who did not want to send their children to school, the 1876 Act provided local districts, Unions and parishes the legal facility to make byelaws which would enforce attendance. Thornton school children were covered by an assortment of byelaws: Thornton itself together with Wimbolds Trafford and Dunham Hill were covered by the Chester District which had formed its own School Attendance Committee in 1877.⁹⁹ Elton and Hapsford were covered under separate Union School Attendance Committees in August 1878.¹⁰⁰ On the 18 May, 1878, Mr Blezard was sent a letter by Mr E.Briscoe, the School Attendance Officer from Chester, saying that he now "had the power to compel the attendance of children in this district, and wishing me to inform him of irregular cases". Mr Blezard wasted no time, and sent in the name of two consistent defaulters. In October the father of one of these children was prosecuted, and the event is recorded in the *Chester Courant* as being "the first case brought by the Guardians of the Chester Union before the Bench".¹⁰¹ It was not, however, until 1885 that persistent offenders were routinely named in the Log Book. In 1891 elementary education became free, a fact duly noted in the Log Book: "From today this school will be carried on as a "Free School" under the Elementary Education Act 1891".¹⁰² Almost

⁹⁹ C.C.E. Report 1878-79, p. 56.

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.* p. 71.

¹⁰¹ Extract copied from *Chester Courant* of 2 October, 1878, in Log Book, 4 Oct. 1878.

¹⁰² Log Book, 1 Sept. 1891.

three months later another letter about attendance gets a sound rebuke from Mr Kirkby:

Received from Mr Turnock - Clerk to the Chester Guardians - a letter requesting that a record should be kept of the visits of the Attendance Officer. Replied saying that such a record has always been kept and will be in future.¹⁰³

The schools were, of course, more than willing to report non-attenders because the grant was dependent upon both the average attendance at the school and on the number and quality of the passes of children present on examination day. So a child who had been absent for any length of time, whether through ill-health or employment, or children whose education was frequently interrupted by harvesting or other farm operations, would be unable to answer the Inspector's questions, and the grant would be reduced. The children in the catchment villages of the Thornton school were needed for sowing and planting, for fruit, potato and mushroom picking as well as for the hay harvest. Thornton appears to have been a community which looked after itself; but the school was becoming, during the last quarter of the nineteenth century, a part of the national rather than the local society, an institution which was not concerned with the traditions of the village, only in the development of the children to the extent that they should attain the national standards and procur^e for the school its fair share of grant.

In July 1878, Mr Blezard returned a list of irregular attenders to the School Attendance Officer. Of the seven children named, the Census shows that at least two were farmers' children: S.J.Hayes, the girl whose absenteeism was later to become the

¹⁰³ Log Book, 20 Nov. 1891.

subject of the prosecution already discussed, lived with her father, grandfather, sister and two nieces, and as the family included both butcher and blacksmith, it seems likely that they needed all available assistance;¹⁰⁴ in 1871 Robert Jeffs was living with his seven brothers and sisters on a 30-acre farm in Dunham Hill,¹⁰⁵ but by 1881 the family had moved to Hapsford Hall, a farm of 200 acres which employed six labourers and four farm servants.¹⁰⁶ Undoubtedly the five sons of the family would all be useful extra hands for the daily workload. The 1881 Census shows that another of the "irregular" schoolboys, John Charles Nield, was living with his fifteen-year old sister and twenty-three year old brother who was farming 32 acres in Wimbolds Trafford; the reason for his absence could very possibly be so that he could help his brother in farm duties which, in the circumstances, would not be affordable otherwise.¹⁰⁷

Thornton was not the only school in the area, though in 1875 it was the only school in the parish for children from five to thirteen. An infant school was built in Dunham Hill "at the sole expense of the Earl of Shrewsbury",¹⁰⁸ but this does not appear to have been in use until June, 1875:

Opening of Dunham Hill Infant School - many children transferred there from Thornton.¹⁰⁹

In January, 1877, at a Meeting of the parishioners, "it was proposed and carried that the Earl of Shrewsbury be corresponded with respecting the opening of a school in

¹⁰⁴ Census Returns (1881).

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁶ Census Returns (1871), Thornton-le-Moors. Mf 24 / 35.

¹⁰⁷ Census Returns (1881).

¹⁰⁸ Barker, *Parish of Thornton*, p. 21.

¹⁰⁹ Log Book, 11 Jun. 1875.

Dunham in opposition to the Infant School erected by his Lordship".¹¹⁰ Two years later eight children were withdrawn from Thornton, "most of whom have been transferred to the Dunham School which has this week been re-opened as a mixed school".¹¹¹ This drop in Thornton's numbers would cause an unwelcome reduction in the grant. The neighbouring village of Ince had its own school, with a much larger average attendance, according to the statistics given in the annual *Report*: in 1878 Ince had an average attendance of 90 compared with Thornton's 55 and accommodation for 118 pupils as opposed to 97 at Thornton.¹¹² Since it was much nearer for many of the Elton children to get to the Ince school rather than the remote Thornton one to which they were supposed to go, there was much coming and going between the schools. Children were admitted and readmitted as, for usually unspecified reasons, they changed their school. The entries in the early years of the Log Book are scattered with names: two brothers were admitted on 27 April, 1875, and readmitted on 4 September later that year. Of the four children admitted on 31 May, 1875, one was admitted again in May, 1876, and the others were readmitted severally in October, 1875, May, 1876 and January, 1877. One child left the area in January, 1878 and was readmitted six months later, and three scholars were readmitted twice. Most of these movements seem to have been due to changing school, but there are some instances of children moving away from the area and then being readmitted a few weeks later. Many of the children left to go into employment, but some went on to further education, including two sons of one of the Managers, and one boy left to become a monitor at another school. These examples are undoubtedly no different from the children of other rural

¹¹⁰ Managers' Meetings, 26 Jan. 1877.

¹¹¹ Log Book, 12 Jan. 1880.

¹¹² *C.C.E. Report, 1878-79*, pp. 857, 859.

schools around the country, but it is interesting to see that the aim of the Public Elementary School, as stated in the Revised Code of 1870, that "The object of the grant is to promote the education of children belonging to the classes who support themselves by manual labour",¹¹³ is, in this respect, not limiting itself to the objective. Many, though not all, of the sons of local large farmers, men who were in a position to pay for private education, were often sent to the village school first where, as appears from the Log Book, little difference was made between them and the children of the labourers. In one instance a Manager's son was kept working after school and when the father came to complain, the master "explained the reason to him and he agreed in the justice of the punishment".¹¹⁴

¹¹³ *C.C.E. Report, 1869-70*, p. xxvi.
¹¹⁴ Log Book, 25 Mar. 1882.

CHAPTER 5
PUNISHMENT

The "Minutes and Instructions" often contained a paragraph on punishments: it rarely changed:

My Lords regret to receive frequent complaints of the excessive use of corporal punishment in schools, and of its occasional infliction by assistants, and pupil-teachers, and even by managers.¹¹⁵

It goes on to urge the inspectors to impress on the masters and managers that "the more thoroughly a teacher is qualified for his position, by his skill, character, and personal influence, the less necessary it is for him to resort to corporal chastisement at all".¹¹⁶ Punishment was to be administered by the head teacher and recorded in the Log Book. In the Thornton Log Book there are many examples of such entries, although, unlike this first one, the type of punishment is not always specified:

Punished William Carmen by public censure, and detention from play after school hours, for taking an arithmetic [*sic*] belonging to one of the girls, scratching out her name and writing his own thereon. Cautioned the whole school against offences of this kind.¹¹⁷

There are not many examples of flagrant dishonesty like this; one boy stole two lead pencils from the master's desk, two more were punished for stealing fowl from a neighbour's trap, and one girl took sixpence from another. The offences fell into about

¹¹⁵ *C.C.E. Report*, 1882-83, p. 159.

¹¹⁶ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁷ Log Book, 8 February, 1875.

seven or eight categories, from fighting in the yard to trespassing on, and damaging, neighbours' property, this last usually after the neighbour had been in to complain:

Cautioned chn. after Mr Jeffs complained of chn. damaging fences and teasing servant boy.¹¹⁸

Boys were frequently punished for "bad language and gross conduct towards girls"; and lack of respect for the master brought out one strongly-termed entry: "Henry Williams severely and publicly punished for impertinence towards the Master".¹¹⁹ Each master had his own attitude to punishment, and occasionally they seem to have an obsession over one particular fault: in 1876 the children were being urged into cleanliness, and there are six entries for dirty hands and untidiness, but none during the rest of Mr Blezard's tenure and only one other in the Log Book up to 1902. There is perhaps a reason for this: in the Code the clause on discipline and organisation specifies that:

... the managers and teachers will be expected to satisfy the inspector that all reasonable care is taken ... to bring up the children in habits of punctuality, of good manners and language, of cleanliness and neatness, and also to impress upon the children the importance of cheerful obedience to duty, of consideration and respect for others, and of honour and truthfulness in word and act.¹²⁰

In 1875 there were two punishments for throwing stones, and it was during that year that the managers of all schools were sent a Circular concerning this very problem:

... so much damage is done to postal telegraph lines by stone-throwing that H.M. Postmaster General is compelled to put the law in force against offenders. Much damage is done by mischievous persons, but it is found that much injury is done by school boys, who do not think they are doing much harm, and are not aware that

¹¹⁸ Log Book, 30, Oct. 1876.

¹¹⁹ Log Book, 19 Nov. 1875.

¹²⁰ *C.C.E. Report, 1875-76*, p.173.

they render themselves liable to imprisonment, and perhaps to flogging ...¹²¹

Mr Evans recorded no punishments when he was master, Mr Ward had two entries during his one year at Thornton, and Mr Kirkby had sixteen in his seventeen years. Mr Blezard records a total of 25 punishments although he was only there for five years. It could be that he was a very strict master, or that he was more conscientious in recording cautions and punishments, or it might be that he was coping with a set of children many of whom who had never had to be restrained into the daily routine of school with its attendant social conduct.

¹²¹ *C.C.E. Report, 1875-76, pp. 205-206.*

CHAPTER 6

GENDER STUDIES

Thornton was a mixed school, taking boys and girls from the age of five to upwards of ten. There were few differences in the curriculum between boys and girls apart from the girls' needlework and, in later years, drawing for the older boys; but two points in particular stand out: in September, 1875, the Corresponding Manager of the school, the Rector, T.F.Barker, inserted an entry in the Log Book:

Previously to this date the Time Table of the school provides that the Girls shall be taught Sewing three times weekly:- Monday, Wednesday, and Friday afternoons. It having been found that the time devoted to such instruction is too little, the Managers have resolved, that in future the Sewing shall be taught four afternoons weekly for two hours at a time as heretofore - on every afternoon on the days which the School meets except Friday; and that the Time Table be altered to meet such arrangement.¹²²

The following week Mr Blezard made this entry: "Girls ceased to be taught Grammar as a Special Subject: Needlework having been substituted".¹²³ Needlework is given especial emphasis in the annual Code, with a section to itself in the examination specifications, and it is important to realise the need in a self-contained community like Thornton-le-Moors for the girls to be adept at needlework. Many girls went into service when they left school, and H.M.I. Sneyd-Kynnersley recalls that lady managers, obviously unaware of this emphasis on needlework, often asked him why

¹²² Log Book, 24 Sept. 1875.

¹²³ Log Book, 1 Oct. 1875.

girls did not learn to sew at school. On repeating the question to colleague he was met with the answer that when the girls go out to service; "if they confess that they can sew, they are put on to do all the household sewing, besides their regular work".¹²⁴ This facetious answer does not disguise the fact that education was still regarded by many as inapplicable to a girl's station in life. Grammar was considered of little value to them, but it is interesting to note that although the girls were thought intellectually inferior, they took their fair share of any prizes that were awarded. The essays written after the annual Temperance lecture were rewarded by certificates for merit:

Received a letter from J.A.Hutchin B.Sc. ... all the essays ... were of sufficient merit to justify him in awarding each competitor an illuminated certificate ... Ernest Evans, Bella Landsberg, Rhoda Hughes, Annie Jeffs, James Landsberg, Sidney Wilkinson and Margaret Harrison.¹²⁵

In arithmetic, though boys and girls were set the same standard in the 1875-76 Code,¹²⁶ by 1879 a note is appended to the "Standards of Examination" in arithmetic: "The work of girls will be judged more leniently than that of boys".¹²⁷ This discrepancy pre-supposed that girls in public Elementary Schools school had no need of arithmetic in later life since they would be going into service or working at home before marrying. This was not always the case: several of the pupil-teachers were girls and one of them stayed on to become a teacher.

¹²⁴ Sneyd-Kynnersley, *H.M.I.*, pp.259-260.

¹²⁵ 17 May, 1901.

¹²⁶ *C.C.E. Report, 1875-76*, p. 176.

¹²⁷ *C.C.E. Report, 1878-78*, p. 373.

CONCLUSION

Both the Log Book and the minutes of the Managers' Meetings reveal many of the problems associated with running an elementary school in the late Victorian period. The Log Book was not intended to be a complete picture of life in a village school, but its information seems particularly inconsistent when comparing the entries of different masters. Consequently, when information is missing, such as punishment reports, or new subjects in the curriculum, it is not safe to assume that these events did not occur. Similarly, since there is no record of school routine before 1875, we cannot be categorical about the immediate effect of becoming a grant-aided school. What can be seen, however, is the development of the school between 1875-1902 through the constant attention of the inspectors.

The importance of the Inspectorate lay in its individual and annual review of each school: this procedure enabled the ground-plan of the Education Department, as specified in the Codes, to spread throughout schools in England and Wales, raising education levels and also giving children a basic knowledge to build on, should environment and inclination allow, after they had left school. Although physically Thornton-le-Moors was just as isolated a village in 1902 as it had been in 1875, culturally the children had become part of the wider nation. The world beyond the village boundaries was now familiar to them, not because of any technological inventions, but because they had learned about it at school, they had had lecturers from outside come in to tell them about it, and they had been on visits with the school

into it. Thornton-le-Moors and its surrounding villages were no different from any other: the Log Book reveals that the population of the parish was not a static one, and that children were quite likely to move out of the area. But since the villages were to a large extent self-sufficient, there was often no need for people to seek work or to travel much beyond the parish boundaries, and thus their awareness of life outside was limited. After 1875 the village children had a composite knowledge of the world about them; each generation as a whole would accept the wider learning not available to their parents. As the influence of the Codes made its mark it would give them greater freedom of choice when they left school to move away from their traditional roles in life to employment in an industrialised society.

The method of awarding grants to schools put great pressure on the teachers. It necessitated restricting the curriculum to that set out in the "Standards for Examination" so that the children could reproduce it on Examination Day. The limiting effect on teaching generally became obvious, and in 1889 the Education Department sought to reverse it by advising inspectors to encourage initiative in schools:

... a good school ... does not limit itself to the requirements of the Code, nor even to the attainment, in regard to each of the subjects of instruction, of the standard which has here been described ... It may show the elder scholars how to turn to a good purpose any means of instruction, or objects of interest which the neighbourhood affords, and may encourage such scholars to bring to the school accounts of what they have observed ...¹²⁸

The cause of the complaint had not disappeared, however, and few schools could afford to spend time on material for which no grant would be forthcoming. Similarly, the building regulations, although undoubtedly important, were too exacting for schools of limited financial resources like Thornton-le-Moors. It was not within the power of the master to rectify faults in the fabric of the building and yet it was he who suffered from a reduction in the grant. The managers, as they saw their own control weaken under the growing domination of the Education Department, found themselves having to spend their money according to the dictates of the inspectors, and were unable to cope with the financial problems that arose. Reading through the Log Book and the minutes of the Managers' Meetings, it seems obvious that a change in the administration was essential if the school was to function properly. These problems were in evidence throughout the country and it was to eradicate them that the Education Act of 1902 put elementary schools into the control of local authorities: the inspectors were still there, but their influence over the financial side of school life was over.

APPENDIX I

List of occupations in the township of Thornton-le-Moors*

Farm servants	11
Labourers (inc. farm labourers)	11
Farmers	10
Domestic servants	9
Charwomen	2
Shoemakers	2
Plate-layers	2
Painters and plumbers	2
Gamekeepers	2
Rector	1
Schoolmaster	1
Pupil teacher	1
Railway labourer	1
Tailor	1
Provision dealer	1
Nurse	1
Housekeeper	1

*Figures taken from 1881 Census Returns, Thornton-le-Moors

APPENDIX II

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NEW CODE (1876).

Standards of Examination.

28.	Standard I.	Standard II.	Standard III.	Standard IV.	Standard V.	Standard VI.
Reading.*	To read a short paragraph from a book not confined to words of one syllable.	To read with intelligence a short paragraph from an elementary reading book.	To read with intelligence a short paragraph from a more advanced reading book.	To read with intelligence a few lines of poetry selected by the inspector.	Improved reading; and (in day schools) recitation of not less than 75 lines of poetry.	Reading with fluency and expression; and (in day schools) recitation of not less than 50 lines of prose, or 100 of poetry.
					N.B.—The passages for recitation may be taken from one or more standard authors, previously approved by the inspector. Meaning and allusions to be known, and if well known to atone for deficiencies of memory.	
Writing.	Copy in manuscript character a line of print, on slates or in copy books, at choice of managers; and write from dictation a few common words.	A sentence from the same book, slowly read once, and then dictated. Copy books (large or half-text) to be shown.	A sentence slowly dictated once from the same book. Copy books to be shown (small hand, capital letters, and figures).	Eight lines slowly dictated once from a reading book. Copy books to be shown (improved small hand).	Writing from memory the substance of a short story read out twice; spelling, grammar, and handwriting to be considered.	A short theme or letter; the composition, spelling, grammar, and handwriting to be considered.
Arithmetic.	Simple addition and subtraction of numbers of not more than four figures, and the multiplication table, to 6 times 12.	The four simple rules to short division (inclusive).	Long division and compound addition and subtraction (money).	Compound rules (money) and reduction (common weights and measures).†	Practice, bills of parcels, and simple proportion.	Proportion, vulgar and decimal fractions.
Grammar, Geography, and History.		(1.) To point out the nouns in the passage read. (2.) Definitions, points of compass, form and motions of earth, the meaning of a map.	(1.) To point out the nouns, verbs, and adjectives. (2.) Outlines of geography of England, with special knowledge of the county in which the school is situated.	(1.) Parsing of a simple sentence. (2.) Outlines of geography of Great Britain, Ireland, and Colonies. (3.) Outlines of History of England to Norman Conquest.	(1.) Parsing, with analysis of a "simple" sentence. (2.) Outlines of geography of Europe—physical and political. (3.) Outlines of History of England from Norman Conquest to accession of Henry VII.	(1.) Parsing and analysis of a short "complex" sentence. (2.) Outlines of geography of The World. (3.) Outlines of History of England from Henry VII. to death of George III.
N.B.—In History and Geography, the scholars in Standards IV.—VI. may, if desired, be taught and examined as one class, taking the three specified divisions of these subjects in successive years; and being expected to show greater proficiency according to the Standard in which they are presented. They should show special knowledge of any historical events or characters connected with the district in which their school is situated.						

N.B.—As to the words printed in italics, see Article 19 C. 2.

* Reading will be tested in the ordinary class books, if approved by the Inspector; but these books must be of reasonable length and difficulty, and unmarked. If they are not so, books brought by the Inspector will be used. Every class ought to have two or three sets of reading books. The class examination (Article 19 C.) will be conducted so as to show the intelligence, and not the mere memory of the scholars. The new subjects introduced into Article 28 are mainly taken, with the same object, from the 4th Schedule (specific subjects) in the Code of 1874.

† The 'weights and measures' taught in public elementary schools should be only such as are really useful,—such as Avoirdupois Weight, Long Measure, Liquid Measure, Time Table, Square and Cubical Measures, and any measure which is connected with the industrial occupations of the district.

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